



## **Marguerite Taylor and Charlie Howell**

Oral History Transcription

April 18, 2003 [Side A]

Interviewed by:	Les Lamon and David Healey
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Transcribed by:	Howard Dukes, Staff, Civil Rights Heritage Center
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Summary:	<p>Marguerite Taylor is the daughter of community leader Renelda Robinson, whose name inspires the University of Notre Dame's Robinson Community Learning Center. In the interview, Ms. Taylor and Charlie Howell speak about Ms. Taylor's life and legacy including her experience as a player for Uncle Bill's Colored Girls Softball team. They also speak about their own experiences growing up in South Bend's east side African American community, and the differences between the east side and west side communities.</p>

0:00:00 [Les Lamon]: Okay, this is April the 18<sup>th</sup>. Present for the interview are Marguerite Johnson...

[Marguerite Taylor]: Taylor.

[LL]: Taylor.

[MT]: That's okay.

[LL]: I'm sorry. Marguerite Taylor and Charlie Howell. And Ms. Taylor's mother was Renelda Robinson, and the interview takes place at the Robinson Community Center. The subject of the interview, though we hope to range widely, I initially began with interest in women's... colored women's softball team which Ms. Taylor has just informed us was name Uncle Bill's Colored Girls Softball team. A photo of this team ran in the *South Bend Tribune* at the time of the opening of Coveleski Stadium. Also present for the interview in addition to me, Les Lamon, is David Healey of the Oral History Project.

0:01:09 [David Healey]: We were talking about the team, and it was sponsored by the Cozy theater? Is that correct?

[Charlie Howell]: They used to call the name the Cozy theater at one time. Cozy girls. The Cozy girls.

[DH]: So, they were originally called the Cozy girls.

[MT]: When I remember it Uncle Bill. His name was Bill Harris, and all of the girls—a lot of them lived over here. Ida Pompey, Doris Howell...

[CH]: I forgot about Ida Pompey.

[MT]: They lived on the it was before it was the northeast it was... you just. It was the east side of South Bend. It was just the South Bend east side.

[DH]: Bill Harris you said.

0:01:52 [MT]: His name was Bill Harris, and he had this group of girls and they traveled. I can remember actually my mother talking about them trying to play the Blue Sox... the Blue Sox never played them. They were actually very good, and they played surrounding cities. They used to play a team out of Gary often. They played a team in Michigan City. The Blue Sox never would pay them

[CH]: They went to Chicago to play.

[MT]: And then they played in Chicago. This is the God's truth. My dad would tell you this. My mom and dad married in 1942. On their honeymoon they went to Chicago. My mother played softball. On the night they got married and they had this... they got married at my grandma's house on a Saturday morning, and Saturday night they were in Chicago and my mom was playing softball.

0:02:44 [LL]: Is that right? Quite a honeymoon.

[MT]: That was their honeymoon and then back to South Bend, and my dad worked at Studebaker.

[LL]: Did your mom play on this team?

[CH]: Oh yes.

[MT]: She was on this team.

[LL]: You say that you have a photograph.

[MT]: We have a photograph.

[LL]: Of the team?

[MT]: Of the entire team Uncle Bill and all. The entire team and Jack Reed has it in his possession—he picked it up about three weeks ago he asked me for it for something that they were doing at the Center for History.

[LL]: They are doing something, I think, on women in sports.

[MT]: Well that's what he picked it up for.

0:03:26 [CH]: You know they used to have an all-male black team here in basketball and they were sponsored by [UAW] Local Five. And later in the year it became...

[LL]: It was sponsored by local number five.

[CH]: Yeah Studebaker local five union.

[LL]: And it was all black.

[CH]: It was all black and they used to play the Globetrotters here. Then over the years it got, when integration came, they got an integrated team and it was a great team.

0:03:58 [LL]: Well, let me ask you this. The team—Uncle Bill's Colored Girls Softball team—and it played all around the Midwest. Was there a league that they played in?

[CH]: No.

[MT]: Not to my knowledge.

[CH]: Not to my knowledge.

[LL]: They get paid for playing?

[MT]: They got paid expenses. I can remember they... they played at Great Lakes Naval Base. They played a team there. And all they would get was their expenses. They actually didn't get paid, and the team stayed together until probably the mid to late '50s.

0:04:26 [LL]: Did you mother continue to play on it at all?

[MT]: She played I remember she played when she was pregnant with my sister.

[CH]: I called them the big leg women because they all had big legs.

[MT]: That's why I didn't remember how long they stayed together because she was still playing and sliding, and my dad was like, "Oh, God. She's pregnant."

[LL]: When was your sister born?

[MT]: My sister was born in '53 and...

[LL]: She was still playing then.

[MT]: She was still playing then.

0:04:52 [DH]: There must be a lot of pictures of this team someplace?

[MT]: I don't know. This is the only picture I've ever seen.

[CH]: Well back in those days there wasn't a lot of pictures. Just like the... Lippincott Park. Ever heard of that? The park over on Ewing Street. Out there on Ewing street. When Satchel Paige came there wasn't a lot of cameras around in those days. The black community didn't have no cameras back... so there wasn't... if there were any pictures of any kind of thing I would say Alberta Dempsey might have some.

[MT]: Might have some.

[CH]: She might have something is the only thing I can say.

[LL]: Did Ms. Dempsey play on the...

[CH]: No, but she was very active and lived on the east side.

[MT]: She was really one of those community leaders.

[CH]: Her husband was the life guard at the Natatorium.

0:05:36 [DH]: The first black man at the Natatorium

[CH]: So, she was very active so anybody who had pictures on the east side. She got pictures that people have never seen. That people have never saw. [inaudible] So, if anybody would have them I would say her, or I don't know. Judge Pompey may not have nothing.

[MT]: Who?

[CH]: Judge Pompey. He's a judge over in Chicago now.

[MT]: Oh. Luther Pompey.

[CH]: Mm hm.

[MT]: Luther.

[CH]: Had a twin brother. That would be the only guy who continued to take them because Mitchell Pompey worked at the *South Bend Tribune* for years. If they don't have them, I wouldn't have no idea where you could find them at.

0:06:15 [DH]: And you said Satchel Paige was here?

[MT]: My mother, she was... when he came here and played in the park she had... and I don't know what happened to it, but I remember seeing a softball that he'd signed and that was one of her prized possessions. That he'd signed a softball—Satchel Paige while he was here in South Bend.

[CH]: You do have a picture of the Negro Leagues when they played baseball around the country? I got one.

[LL]: Of Satchel Paige's team?

[CH]: No, it was just all of the professional black baseball players. They came in and they played and they made a portrait out of it and I got it.

[LL]: One that showed when they came here and played locally?

[CH]: The *Tribune* may have something, I doubt it though. But I have one that somebody sent me of all the black baseball... negro players, but Satchel Paige and all of the negro baseball teams [inaudible] this is where they came and played because due to local 5 again had a baseball team.

0:07:15 [LL]: Okay, now you know he had... Satchel Paige had sort of a barnstorming team of his own and they were people he used to play in the Negro baseball league, and they would sort of barnstorm and play local teams like they were doing here. You remember when he came was he playing with and all black team at the time?

[CH]: Oh yes. At Lippincott Park

[LL]: Now, Lippincott Park was out there on Ewing sort of where the Kroger store...

[CH]: On Ewing and Franklin.

[LL]: Yeah, but there's a little league park right there now.

[CH]: Yeah, that's what it is now. That used to be Lippincott park. And anybody that played ball came to South Bend had the play it out there. I used to sell popcorn.

[LL]: Oh, is that right.

[CH]: This is... South Bend had a great youth leader [inaudible]. If they needed something he would make sure that the team coming in would get

something for their time coming here. And he was a key man. He and Mr. Blanton back in those days.

0:08:23 [LL]: Now let me ask you. Sponsor, Uncle Bill Harris. What did he do?

[MT]: I only knew him... every summer he did the baseball thing and it was all summer.

[CH]: Sold the best hamburgers in South Bend.

[MT]: He had a restaurant didn't he. Him and Mrs. Harris. Now Mrs. Harris died in like the '70s. She died in the early '70s.

[CH]: They used to call it the Big House.

[MT]: Yeah on Liston.

[CH]: No, on Birdsell. They... where Sonny Haynes was born at. Played in Room 222. Lloyd Haynes was born next door. [inaudible]

[LL]: You mean Haynes like the Haynes funeral home?

[MT]: Haynes Funeral home. That was...

[LL]: Ok

[CH]: Their nephew played in Room 222. A movie.<sup>1</sup>

0:09:11 [LL]: Now he's the star. He's the movie star you were talking about out here.

[MT]: No that's Mike Warren.

[LL]: I wonder who it was... Mike Warren.

[CH]: I'm talking about was born on Hill Street, white fellow. Italian. His dad had a drug store on Hill and South Bend Avenue.

[MT]: Sergios...

[CH]: No, before Sergio.

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<sup>1</sup> "Room 222" was actually an episodic television series that aired from 1969–74.

[MT]: Ok.

[CH]: He's a movie star now. He makes movies now. Still makes movies.

[MT]: But Mike Warren he was also born here on Meade Street.

[LL]: Oh yeah. I remember seeing him play and he's been back, he comes back. He narrated a...

[CH]: His mother's here.

[LL]: Yeah...

[MT]: No, she's...Brother...

[LL]: His brother's here I think.

[MT]: Debbie's here. I hear from his sister and his mom's in Washington. She's real sick.

0:09:54 [LL]: So, they Haynes... what you're talking about Uncle Bill's Harris was out near where Haynes lived.

[CH]: Yeah.

[LL]: Haynes eventually moved out on Lincolnway

[CH]: Right. I moved him out.

[LL]: Oh, did you really? Ok... Because I know their granddaughter's she's a student of mine.

[CH]: Colfax street used to run right into their home and it made that circle around the church there. Before they made that circle...

[MT]: The Orange Street Connector.

[CH]: That used to be [inaudible] right through there and they were about four doors off Orange Street. Was that liquor store... the third house before the Haynes.

[LL]: What is it LaPorte?



[CH]: No, off Linden... Birdsell.

[MT]: Birdsell.

[LL]: Ok.

0:10:39 [DH]: I got a quick question for you. The team must have had uniforms.

[MT]: They had uniforms.

[DH]: Do you still have your mother's uniforms?

[MT]: No. that was like forty years ago. We don't have the uniform. I don't know what happened to it.

[CH]: I wonder if Peggy still [inaudible].

[MT]: Peggy... Harris?

[CH]: Yeah.

[MT]: Peggy didn't play with them, did she?

[CH]: She played with them.

[DH]: Are there any members of the team still in town that are still living.

[MT]: You know what, there is one member that's still living and still active, and her name is Doris Grady Howell, and I think I have a number for her.

[CH]: I thought that might have been moving out to California.

[MT]: I think I might have a number...

[LL]: Is she still in town?

[MT]: She's the only person that I looked at that picture and I knew most of those people on it and she's the only one...

[LL]: She any kin to you?

[CH]: Cousin.

[LL]: Uh-huh. Ah.

0:11:40 [DH]: Now if they had a team and Uncle Bill was the main sponsor, but were there other companies that sponsored?

[CH]: I wonder if Spencer would have anything?

[MT]: If who?

[CH]: Spencer.

[MT]: Spencer Grady?

[CH]: Yeah. I never did think of it. Of course, Sonny's out in Kansas. Anthony just passed. Doris is in Mishawaka somewhere.

[MT]: I think I have her number.

[CH]: Not Dorie... Effie... what's her middle name? I would say Spencer might have.

[DH]: What about programs? They must have printed up some programs when they...

[MT]: They just played.

[DH]: They just played.

0:12:13 [MT]: They just played you know what and money... And I know that I was a kid, and what I did was run around a buy popcorn and stuff. But I know as I got older and we talked about it that money was always a problem for getting the team here and there. They were never paid, but they didn't play anyone in South Bend, so they played around in the region and like getting them there and feeding them and getting them back home and paying money for gas... it was like \$0.23 a gallon.

[LL]: Yeah.

[CH]: Or a nickel a gallon.

[MT]: I remember twenty-three cents.

[CH]: I remember a nickel.

0:12:51 [MT]: I remember my grandmother going to Red Bird and getting ten gallons of gas for \$2.30, but as far as sponsors go or somebody underwriting them I don't think that happened. I don't think that happened back then. They just did it and... it seems like those girls pitched in and paid for their own uniforms.

[CH]: I can tell you what color they were. Can you tell what color they were?

[MT]: Mm-mm.

[CH]: Brown... light brown and upper were dark brown. And the Blue Sox wore blue and white. And they had long stockings and they were brown like.

0:13:37 [LL]: Why did they call themselves Uncle Bill's then if he didn't...

[CH]: Uncle Bill was the one that really...

[MT]: He was the manager. He was... put them together.

[LL]: He organized it.

[CH]: He was the organizer. He was the team manager. He put those kids together as young adults and kept them together. They played every summer for years. They were all... by the time I could remember they were all grown. And if you look at this picture my mom was probably 16—she was probably 16 or 17. She said she was the youngest—she and Doris were the youngest kids on the team. And he put this whole this whole team... and every summer.

0:14:13 [DH]: Did he recruit them out of local high schools then?

[CH]: No, they just got out and played at the old Oliver Park. They knew... they started out in the old Oliver Park. You know where Oliver Park is?

[LL]: No.

[CH]: That's going on Western and Chapin. Used to be a grocery store on Jefferson on the corner and the park was behind it.

[LL]: Well, there's a park there now.

[CH]: Yeah, that's where the public housing is that where the ball diamond was.

[LL]: Where Hering House is right there too.

[CH]: No, Hering House is down...

[MT]: I went to Hering House. I remember the Hering House.

[CH]: Hering House was up farther.

[LL]: It was further in on Western.

[CH]: Yeah.

[MT]: Further up the street.

[LL]: Ok.

[CH]: Uncle Bill would... Him and Chuck Dempsey. I have to say it, but most of our leaders, but of my leader's kids wouldn't look up to. I don't think I ever got... I stayed mad at Chuck until I got grown. He got me best whipping in the city of South Bend on the corner of Corby and Notre Dame. He was going down the street and we hopped on the back of his truck. And he... it was winter time and we was poor. And he pulled right in the front of 814 North St. Peter and... and that's where the whipping started

0:15:20 [LL]: Oh gosh. How old were you?

[CH]: I might have been 11, 12, or 13, but I came in getting a whipping for being on the back ol' truck by Chuck Dempsey and daddy whopped me again.

[LL]: Oh yeah, that's the way it was then. Get a whooping at school and you'd get one when you got home.

Well now is this any kin to Alberta Dempsey?

[MT]: That was her husband.

[CH]: They might have something. [inaudible], Phyllis or somebody might could help you with.

[LL]: Alberta might have some stuff.

[CH]: She's up and down all the time. You don't know how she's gon' feel. But Alberta. I would say... if anybody had any pictures she would be Alberta.

[LL]: Do you have her number? We... her number and... Is it Doris Grady Howell?

[MT]: It's Doris Grady Howell and I think I have Doris' number.

[CH]: I haven't checked in the phone book.

[MT]: No but I call her... she goes to our church...

0:16:27 [LL]: How much interaction was there? Because I hear you talking... you were an east sider and you were an east sider. How much interaction between you or your families and the people living over here and the people living way out on the west side?

[MT]: I can tell you this. As a kid growing up on the late '50s and '60s we used to just die to get to the corner of Washington and Walnut. They had dances over there at Cherry Hall, and they had the VFW, and they had...

[CH]: American Legion.

[MT]: The American Legion. My mother wouldn't let us go there. But anyway, we used to just die on Saturday to go there because they had teenaged dances. And more than once it was like, those kids, they would just run us back to the east side. There was never any relationship between the kids from the east side and the kids from the west side.

It was like—excuse me—it was like this terrible rivalry, and living on the east side we all thought that we were rich and those people who lived on the west side, we all thought they were dirt poor. Well we didn't know... What we didn't know is that we were all dirt poor. We didn't know we were dirt poor. We thought we were rich and famous and we thought that we really had money. We didn't. We didn't. We had parents...

0:17:48 I remember Charlie's mother and father real well. Both... all his entire family. All your brothers from Bobby Lee down to Henry and Henrietta. Know all of them in between. And they all... we all had two parents and most of our mothers stayed home. My mom never worked until she... my

baby brother, I'm 18 years older than he is. She didn't work until he went to kindergarten and then she started volunteering at Perley school in the library and that turned into a job somewhere else. But all of our parents, our moms all stayed home and our dads all worked at Studebakers, and we all just thought we were rich and everybody lived like us. But they didn't. They didn't, and the people on the west side thought we thought we were rich.

[LL]: That's right yeah.

0:18:35 [MT]: And so, they used to like run us home on a regular basis.

[CH]: Well the east side, they used to call us [inaudible] over here, but we used to walk to school. We walked to Central. And we used to get up at five o'clock in the morning to be on the basketball court when we were going to Perley. Perley School was so poor it didn't have a gym. We had to go to Newman—what they call Newman Center now, used to be South Bend Armory. And that's where we practiced basketball. We had to get up and walk down there every morning. Can you believe that? Didn't care how much snow it was. Old man Walling and them would ask, "Be on the court at six o'clock," and we had to get up and get down there.

My dad was at work. He was working at Studebaker and Schafer Gear, so if we wanted to play ball that's how we got there. We had to walk down there. East side been that way, like I said... Can you remember the fountain at the corner of Notre Dame and South Bend Avenue?

0:19:30 [MT]: Sure, I remember the fountain.

[CH]: I was telling them earlier...

[MT]: Water fountain?

[CH]: Yeah. Everybody drinks out of it.

[LL]: Just a public water fountain.

[MT]: Just a public water fountain. Right in front of the fire station when it was a fire station.

[LL]: We used to have those around. I remember too, yes.

[MT]: Yeah, I remember the fountain.

[CH]: Well, everybody used to drink out of the same fountain. Wasn't no white and black.

[MT]: That just always amazes me. Maybe it's just because I grew up in another generation, because I can remember Christyne Woolridge talking about... I remember the public toilet that was down in front of the courthouse, and you used to have to walk down and I...she was talking about, you know, like it was segregated, and you couldn't... I remember one... because as a kid I could remember the stench of it. It was like horrible.

[CH]: It stunk bad.

[MT]: And she used to say, oh no blacks couldn't... I was going really. Maybe I grew... maybe I grew up in another time.

[LL]: Well, she's a generation ahead of you.

[MT]: She's a generation ahead of me.

[CH]: Well, when I was coming up that bathroom was always there.

[MT]: It was just always there.

[CH]: And everybody used it. Johnny Wooden... I could remember because I'm pretty sure it was the superintendent of schools when South Bend Central was playing a team down in Fort Wayne or Evansville and the black players couldn't play and they came back to South Bend. They refused to play.

0:20:49 [LL]: Well we have... Jack Reed talks about that. He went to Riley and one of the coaches was Mo Morrison and they were going to play in Evansville and he talked about how they couldn't find any place to stay down there. And Morrison—I can't remember the story now—but either... None of them was going to stay in this hotel if he couldn't stay in this hotel and a lot of stories.

[CH]: Johnny Wooden had the same thing and superintendent of school Fisher. He wouldn't let the team go down there. But you know, you look at the whole thing back and before Marguerite was born and I... I read in a book where South Bend High used to play Notre Dame. I think I mentioned that to you. That used to be... South Bend High used to play the University of Notre Dame. Downright outright, and the Smith, Bernie

Smith's son played with the team and he left it and he was a [inaudible] down there for the University of Notre Dame. He left here, he used to have a chauffeur drive a Cadillac. And they were on the corner of Frances and Campeau—the house on the corner there next to the park and the moved from there to St. Peter Street. I can remember...

0:22:03 [LL]: And he had his own chauffeur.

[CH]: Notre Dame paid for it. And I can remember that chauffeur used to come out in front of St. Peter Street just as big... and we loved to get in the back of that old car—that chauffeur car. The old chauffeur got out and open the door for us.

[MT]: He was a rub down man.

[CH]: He was rubbing. He was the one who invented the [inaudible], and Luke [inaudible], and then he left and moved to Culver, Indiana and had one of the largest chicken farms in the state of Indiana. And his one boy—I guess they're both dead now. No Doris is still living—Doris Paxton. She's some...

[MT]: Dorothy Paxton?

[CH]: Yeah, she's some relation to me in there somewhere. But all this group was on the east side.

0:22:48 [LL]: Was all east side group.

[CH]: So, we never had a... I never seen anything prejudice over here as far as I could see. Because we had grocery stores on every corner.

[MT]: We're getting ready to put out a newspaper and you might be interested in it. Sort of an oral history of the northeast neighborhood. We have people who lived over here a long time, so what we've done is take stories from them. It's called... The Northeast Neighborhood Council put out a quarterly newspaper, and Jim Roemer did an article. He grew up on Angela and he talked about vacant land and playing in the fields. After that article came out there was another guy who actually lives in the Rockne house now, and his next-door neighbor talked to him about the seventeen grocery stores that were in this neighborhood.

[CH]: Had more than that.



[LL]: My God.

[MT]: And actually named every one of them. I can remember a lot of them.

[CH]: We had one right across the street.

[MT]: I remember the one right across the street.

[CH]: Poochie had one right across the street.

[MT]: Right across the street. Yes, it was like a meat market and a vegetable stand.

[CH]: And the Burns on South Bend Avenue and the other one was where the liquor store—Harris liquor store. That used to be a grocery store.

[MT]: Yes, Harris I remember that one.

[CH]: That used to be a grocery store.

[MT]: Where 23 is...

[CH]: Where the check cashing place is that was a liquor store.

0:24:11 [LL]: I wonder how in the world they all made a living

[MT]: There were seventeen that we could name, and the name of the store where it was in this neighborhood, but remember—A&P built not this building, they built the building next door.

[LL]: Next door. I remember it was an A&P when I moved here.

[MT]: The A&P and it was a huge store, but originally the A&P was where the laundromat is.

[CH]: I still remember when it came in.

[MT]: And next door to the laundromat was a drug store that had a soda fountain in it. But we felt when they built this A&P over here... that was as mega-Kroger.

[LL]: That was a big store.

[MT]: We thought that was just huge because we had all these little tiny stores.

[LL]: It put those other stores out of business.

[MT]: I think it put a real dent in it but what happened was—at least in our house I remember, like Rhymers grocery store was on the corner of South Bend Avenue and Notre Dame.

[CH]: My father had a charge account.

[MT]: And we had a charge account. I can remember my dad working at Studebakers and my mom signing his entire weeks check to the grocery store. You couldn't do that at the A&P, but you could run up there and get bread and milk and whatever. There was a butcher—you know—they did the butcher and not the pre-butcher.

[CH]: What was the one on Frances and...

[MT]: Roth.

[CH]: Roth was down that... what was on the corner of Sorin...

[MT]: Yeah right in the curve but I... these stores were...

[CH]: There were tons of them down through there.

[LL]: Yeah, I guess.

[MT]: They were just you know...

[CH]: And you had a charge account at every one. You'd run over to this one and can't get nothing 'til you pay, you go to the next one.

0:25:53 [LL]: I guess when it was payday at Studebaker's they all collected.

[CH]: Rhymer was the big one over there.

[MT]: We lived right up—my family lived on Frances Street. Rhymer's was like a half a block between the alley. Where the 23 Club is, and that's like the 700 block—the beginning of the 700 block. And my parents lived at 737 Frances which was one street over. So, you could see the store.

0:26:20 [DH]: What did your father do at Studebaker?

[MT]: He was a laborer. And the best thing that ever happened to him was that Studebaker's went out of business, because he went back to school, and he became an electrician and he retired from Dodges as a skilled laborer. But he came here with the WPA, and... What did he do? He worked on roads.

[CH]: They put South Bend Avenue in. Joe Fragominni did Eddy Street when Eddy Street was a dirt street. Joe... they came out of high school and was in college and he designed Eddy Street.

[LL]: Oh, is that right?

[CH]: Joe Fragominni that you know [inaudible]. That was his first job right here.

[MT]: When my dad came here... from Cleveland, Ohio.

[LL]: Okay.

[MT]: And he'd been here ever since about 1941.

[LL]: Met your mother and married in '42.

[MT]: Met my mother and... came in '40 and met my mother and married her in '42 and has lived in the same house ever since.

[LL]: Is that right.

0:27:28 [MT]: He lives in the same house. He bought, they bought two little houses that had one bedroom a piece—tore them down...

[CH]: I thought they tore one down.

[MT]: No, they tore them both down.

[CH]: Did they?

[MT]: They tore both those houses down. Built one three-bedroom house on one lot, and remember there was a whole yard to the side? They had eight children—two sets of twins. So, then they built onto the house on the other lot—that house has five bedrooms on one floor.

[CH]: That lot was a lot bigger then.

[MT]: But there were eight kids.

[LL]: Yeah.

[MT]: And that's how he got here. But my mother was born on north Frances Street. In the 700 block.

[LL]: Spent her whole life right there.

[MT]: Been here her entire life.

0:28:09 [CH]: We talk about at St. Joe Hospital between my grandmother and mother... But most of the kids that grew up on the east side we were all born and raised in St. Joe Hospital. There was never nobody who said that we couldn't... that we couldn't be born in St. Joe Hospital like it was down south. What people on the east... all came out of St. Joe Hospital. That's unusual.

[LL]: Yeah.

[MT]: I just... you know, when I was 16 I went to John Adams High School. That's the district we lived in. But when I was in high school all the schools went to Central to summer school. That's where you went. Everybody went to Central. So, we would go to summer school just to meet folks. Because I didn't know anybody who lived on the south side, so we would go to summer school just to meet people.

0:29:00 We were walking home... there were three of us. We walked home and every single day we would stop at the Original Hot Dog House. Coney Island Original Hot Dog Place, and it was downtown.

[CH]: Was it on Michigan or was it on LaSalle?

[LL]: It was on Michigan when I first came to town.

[CH]: Ok. Then it moved around the corner .

[MT]: It moved around the corner, but it was on Michigan. So, every day we would stop there, buy this RC Cola for ten cents, and then we'd keep walking home. So, we thought it was just extremely hot that day, so we thought... we were just getting ready to eat and drink the pop here. So, the

guy gave us the sodas and pop and he said no, you can't drink it in here. And we went like, "What?" One of our friends threw a brick through his window. We thought we were being discriminated against. We had like friends who said, "He didn't want us in there because we're black [inaudible]." He didn't explain to us. As I got older and I looked at it I thought maybe he didn't want us in there because he sells beer and wine. But he didn't tell us that.

[LL]: Didn't tell you that.

[MT]: He just said, "No. You gotta get out and you can't drink it in here."

[CH]: But when we went next... next door to the Grenada Theater... we went next door to the Grenada Theater, we ate in there as kids?

0:30:17 [MT]: No, he told us we couldn't. That was my one crushing blow that you never forget...

[CH]: Were you on LaSalle, or were you on Michigan?

[MT]: I was on Michigan.

[CH]: Ok, when you went across the street next to the Grenada Theater. There used to be a parking lot between the Grenada Theater and the [inaudible] building. We used to go in there and eat and drink our pop. Right in there.

[MT]: He told us we had to get out of his building.

[CH]: He never stopped. He never stopped us. But...

[LL]: That's across from the gas company.

[CH]: [inaudible] Was on the corner of Colfax and Michigan.

[LL]: Colfax and Michigan.

[CH]: There was a parking lot. And there was a restaurant and next door was Isabell piano store was on the corner. And he never stopped us from eating in there.

[MT]: I was crushed.

[CH]: I would come in there with a bunch of kids... boys and everything else and he never bothered us when we came in there.

[MT]: He told us we couldn't eat there. We thought we were being discriminated against one of our friends—who is now a city policeman, I think he just retired—he threw a brick through his window. Two days later. He thought we was being discriminated against, and he wasn't even with us. We were just crushed about this.

0:31:30 [DH]: So, you think basically it's because he was selling beer and wine.

[MT]: I got older, but he didn't say that to us, but as I got older I looked at his building one day and thought he wouldn't let us drink our pop. But when I looked at the building it said beer and wine, so I'm assuming maybe that was the reason that...

[LL]: But he let you drink in there.

[CH]: Yeah, he let us drink our pop. Well Melvin Dungy [inaudible] and we pull up... Now Melvin was just the opposite. Melvin was just as tall as he is now. Always had a beer. Had a Buick and he could go across the street here was Corby's was until they [inaudible] it and buy a beer for us. That's how we got our beer because Melvin would get it.

[LL]: Is that right...

[CH]: But he... we wouldn't go no further [inaudible] first church and sit on the steps. Or go down here and get a watermelon off the corner... do you remember the watermelon? Fruit stand used to be on the corner. We go get a watermelon and go to the church and sit there and eat it and that be about as far as we gon' go. We were mischievous, but nobody ever stopped us.

[LL]: Didn't get in any trouble.

[CH]: No. I used to love to go see Notre Dame play ball. Come to South Bend... Notre Dame have a good football... only have... a bunch of boys that played football against. Guys that got off the train. Back in those days that was a drunk at the football game. They got drunk and want to play football together. And we used to take the [inaudible] out of them.

[MT]: Charles.

[CH]: We used to be... and they police used to stop us. They would say quit taking their money from them. Well if we didn't take it you were going to take it for being drunk. They used to put that old paddy wagon out at the corner of Angela and Notre Dame and get them when they come out of there. And they'd fight all the time.

0:33:13 [LL]: Used to be... I know. I grew up near the University of Tennessee and it was the same way—people be drunk in the stadium all the time...

[CH]: And fight.

[LL]: Oh yeah.

[CH]: Fight among their own buddies. They come and bother us and people ain't going to fight. I don't know what that was all about. Never could figure it out. But that was our game. We'd get ourselves five dollars, and we'd go on home. Go to the neighborhood store and buy some candy with it. They didn't have no money.

0:33:42 [LL]: Aw well this was... I guess what I'm hearing is that life over here on the east side was less restricted than the experience that we hear from people growing up on the west side.

[MT]: I just think it was really less restrictive.

[LL]: Yes.

[CH]: 'Cause our parents... our parents...

[MT]: You know like I said we all had... my grandmother... my grandmother actually was the first black columnist for the *South Bend Tribune*. She worked for the *South Bend Tribune* for 43 years.

[LL]: What was her name?

[MT]: Her name was Etta Bowen.

[LL]: Etta Bowen that's right did a column "In Colored Circles."

[MT]: "Colored Circles" that was her column.

[CH]: "Colored Circles."

[MT]: “Colored Circles.”

[LL]: Okay, yeah.

0:34:17 [MT]: And in the 1960s they changed it to “The Neighborhood News,” and she had a counterpart in River Park called “The River Park News.” Her white counterpart. And what they did was... was Mary Smith of...

[CH]: [inaudible]

[MT]: Was you know visited her relatives in Chicago for the weekend... It was like the society, the black society column.

[CH]: They... all the notes the church notes went in there, and I got a nickel from my grandmother for delivering the *South Bend Tribune* when I go to... to school.

[MT]: Go to Central every day, she wrote the notes and had to have them in by nine o'clock so she would... I have a twin who went to Central and she would, in later years, she would drop them off she would pay her...

[CH]: A nickel. She would give us a nickel.

[MT]: She gave her a dollar.

[LL]: Inflation took over.

[MT]: Inflation took over, right.

0:35:16 [DH]: Now you mentioned Hering House. Did you go to Hering House?

[CH]: Went to the Hering House. Yeah, I did. Howard Dukes talked to me about the Hering House, but when the Hering House was really jamming and that was the social center for blacks in South Bend, I was too young to go there. I went to Hering House—they had, before they had child care as we know it today, they had a structured daycare center there.

[CH]: [inaudible] down in the basement. You know who had a hand in putting that together? Jess Dickinson.

[MT]: Jess Dickinson, but I...

[CH]: Very instrumental.



[MT]: But Irene Curry was one of my teachers...

[CH]: What's her name lived on the corner of Blaine and Portage...

[MT]: Ida Mitchem.

[CH]: Ida Mitchem.

[MT]: Ida Mitchem. She was there. Ida Mitchem was there. Irene Curry.

[LL]: Josephine Curtis.

[MT]: And Cheryl Ashe... No, not Josephine Curtis. Cheryl Ashe's mother, Theresa. Remember Theresa Ashe? You know Cheryl? From the public library?

[LL]: You...

[MT]: Cheryl Ashe.

[CH]: Her dad was the first black to work for the welfare office.

0:36:16 [LL]: Didn't he... somebody published a newspaper too. She was telling us... telling one of the students about copies of newspaper. I was thinking...

[MT]: Oh, can I get you some. Copy of the newspaper.

[LL]: Yeah, you got some?

[MT]: Yeah, I have 1943. Bobby's in it.

[DH]: Alright, put this on pause.

[Recording interrupts]

0:36:36 [CH]: Red wanted to put a bar here, and my dad and Mrs. Bowens and everybody at First Church just had a fit that we were going to have a black tavern on the east side. They said no, no, no. They fought it and killed it. And then the only thing that we ever had over here, operated and owned by blacks, was the Harris liquor store. Now my dad went along with that. Mrs. Bowens and all these people along with my sister and her husband put the liquor store over here, but at first, they were going to fight that. And

to this day the only thing that we ever had that was all black was the Black Mikado.

[LL]: Ok, I remember that. Down here on the corner.

[CH]: But nobody fought it. That was owned and operated by O.C. Carmichael. Associates put that give him the money to put that in there.

0:37:28 [LL]: Jack Reed, I believe, was telling us about that.

[CH]: But that's where that came from but O.C. Carmichael...

[LL]: Put up the money...

[CH]: Put the money up for them to have that, and they wanted to make it an exclusive club that you couldn't come in unless you had a jacket on they put jacket. But that wasn't South Bend and they couldn't make it. But you had to have a tie on, have black shoes, and have a coat and you must have your shoes shined. But that was wasn't going to go in South Bend too good, and they closed... two or three... and nobody went and boom.

[LL]: Wasn't enough clientele.

[CH]: Really that was owned and operated [by blacks] but there was so many white people behind the scenes and it couldn't work. That's why we never had an all-white... black tavern on the east side and I don't know if what they would do today if they tried to put one over here.

0:38:20 [LL]: Well, let me ask you—there were no black taverns. There was one black owned liquor store you said. Where any of these grocery stores owned by blacks?

[CH]: No.

[LL]: No. Were there any black owned businesses over here at all except the liquor store?

[CH]: In later years the filling station was right here.

[MT]: He has the original...

[CH]: The filling station was right here. The... what was their name? Had the filling station?

[MT]: Williams, Steve Williams...

[CH]: Had a filling station right here. That and the liquor store was the only thing black over here. Black business over on the east side. No breweries. Outside of that filling station and Hattie's.

[MT]: The filling station was way later, and Hattie's too.

[CH]: Yeah. Hattie, that came later. [inaudible] bought the Frank wanted to sell that liquor store and the tavern to Red Smith and how daddy and your grandmother and everybody at First Church had a natural fit.

[MT]: Fit.

[CH]: I was gon a tavern... You put no black tavern...

0:39:22 [LL]: Now, let me ask you this—because the first black family that I remember hearing about living over on this side—this was a long time ago—were the Allens.

[CH]: Who?

[LL]: Chester Allen

[CH]: Oh, they came later.

[LL]: But they lived down here on Howard... Right and I remember... was that considered... was that area out there... a fair number of black families lived. So, it was all sprinkled around.

[CH]: Moved to... Cassopolis. George... George...

[MT]: Cross?

[CH]: George Cross. Then you had [inaudible], had Luther Boyd over on St. Louis. My aunt lived on St. Louis...

[MT]: There's always been a spattering of us. My street, Frances Street, we lived between South Bend Avenue and Sorin. Actually, two blocks.

[CH]: Probably had more blacks in there [inaudible].

[MT]: It was almost an all black...

[DH]: All black area.

[MT]: It was almost all black.

[CH]: But just half white...

[MT]: But there were whites there. The Ferguson's lived there. There were whites but there were a good number of blacks in those two blocks.

[CH]: Had more blacks on [inaudible] street than I would say [inaudible].

0:40:37 [LL]: But generally, just as you say, kind of was smattering around. And you all went to Perley School.

[CH]: All went to Perley School. All went to Jefferson. Had a choice, go to Jefferson or go to Central. That was our choice.

[MT]: I went to Adams... I graduated from Adams in 1962.

[CH]: It was Jefferson.

[MT]: I went to Jefferson, there were 19 blacks out of 360 or 70 kids...

[LL]: This was Adams or Jefferson?

[MT]: Adams.

[LL]: This was Adams.

0:41:00 [MT]: I was a senior, there were 19 blacks—18 of us started kindergarten together. We picked up one who had moved—Bill Nicks—his brother. They moved from the South Side to Cedar street when I was a freshman. So, it was a really stable neighborhood.

[LL]: It was.

[MT]: Eighteen of us started kindergarten together.

[CH]: Did you go to school with a Madelyn Blanton and Moseeta Blanton and any of them.

[MT]: I went to school with Barbara Lawson.

[CH]: Ok. Sorry about that. I thought. I just asked.

[MT]: I went to school with Barbara. We graduated. Karen Howell. We graduated.

[CH]: But that was much later. Blanton's they all had... were light, bright, damn near white. And their daddy had a pool hall on Washington...

[LL]: Blanton you say?

[CH]: Yeah. Had a pool hall on the corner of Washington and Birdsell.

[LL]: Ok.

[CH]: Boyd Blanton, Madelyn Blanton, Louis was the first black to graduate from Adams. And they lived on Minor street.

0:42:06 [LL]: They lived over here, but he worked... He had his business out there.

[MT]: There were a lot of black businesses on Washington and Chapin.

[LL]: Oh yeah.

[MT]: My dad used to go to restaurants over there. There were none over here.

[CH]: Blanton had... him and Smoke Pierce ran the policy wheel. They had the biggest policy wheel and Momma Chickee and everybody had to answer to [inaudible] Smith. With Blanton.

[LL]: I see.

[CH]: It was quite a town. It was a very... politics. Like my dad was a bail bondsman. He was a Republican. He was a bail bondsman. The other Republican was the Williams family that lived over on Sadie...

[LL]: Which family?

[CH]: Williams.

[LL]: Williams, okay.

[CH]: They were the other part did the bondsman. Bonded work. You had blacks doing the bonds. 'Cause we got people out of jail. I used to hate to go down to the jail and get people out. Used to call the mom and daddy and say you go get them.

[LL]: Oh, you gotta go down and make bond.

[CH]: Had to go and get you out of jail.

0:43:16 [LL]: Listen you was just talking... it just stuck me. Down where the Black Mikado was, wasn't that where you started Solidarity Day?

[CH]: No. We started Solidarity Day over on [inaudible] by South Bend Central High School.

[LL]: But didn't you used to have something over there?

[CH]: That's when they tore down the Laurel Club, then we came to the east side.

[LL]: Yeah, ok.

[MT]: And we use to change Hill Street to Solidarity Street.

[CH]: They still do.

[MT]: They put it down.

[CH]: That's where we started at the old laurel Club, and the first one that came along was Judge Allen. I never ate so much chicken in my life in the next year. [inaudible] About ten people came all day long and we had to eat all that chicken. And we had chicken, chicken every time I looked up. My wife would have chicken.

[LL]: Chicken again.

0:44:05 [CH]: Chicken, chicken, chicken. But what we did with that, the reason we started it. We used to go to the West Side Democratic Club and we you [inaudible] and you give us a card and say call. And we called you and could never get to you. So, John Harris we were kind of unique. We had three black democratic clubs where they only had one white democratic club.

[LL]: Yeah south... west side.

[CH]: West Side Democratic club. Hungarian and Belgian they all had their own. But when they got to Dyngus Day they all formed under one. So, I got Speed Webb. Speed Webb had the All-American, no, the Combined. Charlie Smith had the All-American and John Tidwell and us all the Metropolitan. So, the white man really loved it—when he had us all split. He'd give you a nickel, you a nickel and me a penny. And we couldn't get nothing done. And then Voorde came along. I show you my book when I get back home. And he put the black cabinet together. And that's when the white people in South Bend was going crazy. Voorde and his black cabinet.

[LL]: Who all was in that black cabinet that Voorde had?

[CH]: Speed Webb was the head of the workers at the health department. Chuck Dempsey was a vice superintendent of the street department. Harris and me was at the dog pound...

0:45:29 [LL]: During that time wasn't Spooks [spelling?] Nicks over at the welfare department. Spooks Nicks. Do you remember him?

[CH]: Carl and Charles was the ones on Chalfant... Arthur Ashe.

[MT]: This was after that.

[CH]: He worked there... he lived over across the street from your grandmother over on Frances Street. Let's see... Dorothy Howell, Louise Hubbard and I think that might be it.

[LL]: So, these were, in essence, these were people that had political appointments...

[CH]: Right.

[LL]: ...in city government under Voorde.

[CH]: And *Ebony* magazine called it the Mayor's "Black Cabinet."

[LL]: Oh, so they wrote about it in *Ebony*.

[CH]: Yeah, they made a big headline. I got it at home.

[LL]: Oh.

[CH]: I even give it to Chuck.

0:46:19 [LL]: When was that?

[CH]: I'll give it to you when I get home.

[LL]: Ok.

[CH]: Not hard to find. I know right where it is.

[MT]: And you know who else... I... Maurice...

[CH]: Roberts.

[MT]: Roberts. Do you know he just moved? Do you know where he lives?

[CH]: No.

[MT]: He lives on the corner of Corby and Webber court.

[CH]: Yeah.

[MT]: This... he has a lot of memorabilia. This is where I got all of this stuff.

[CH]: Let's see. I ain't never see nothing.

[MT]: Called *The Elite*. Got all this stuff.

[CH]: Let me ask you a question. Can you remember? I don't remember. I saw it in the museum. The first time I went to the museum when we did town... ward campaign when we did that recount. Remember that? Had a...

[Audio ends]